Panel Probing 16-Year Span Of CIA Plots

By George Lardner Jr.
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The Senate intelligence committee is investigating evidence of CIA involvement in assassination plots spanning the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) said yesterday.

Church said, however, that the committee has yet to uncover any evidence that "would directly link" any of those Presidents with the CIA's "involvement in this kind of activity."

Church said the committee was making a determined effort to discover the precise chain of command that authorized the CIA-backed murder schemes and attempts, in order to fashion effective remedial measures.

Other sources confirmed, meanwhile, that the CIA supplied guns to the assassins who killed Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Trujillo on May 31, 1961.

"These people were after a token of (U.S.) support and I would say they got it," one knowledgeable source reported.

CIA files on circumstances surrounding Trujillo's assassination are among the materials that the agency has provided to both the Rockefeller commission and the Senate committee.

In March, The Washington Post quoted two former officials, both highly placed in the Kennedy administration, as saying the CIA had supplied weapons to the Trujillo assassins. U.S. officials in Ciudad Trujillo (now Santo Domingo) tried in vain to dissuade the plotters after the Bay of Pigs fiasco in Cuba in mid-April of 1961.

The Senate committee continued its CIA assassination probe yesterday by questioning former CIA Director Richard M. Helms, now U.S. ambassador to Iran, for more than four hours in private.

In the House, some spirited debate may be in store Monday in connection with the resignation of Rep. Lucien N. Nedzi (D-Mich.) as chairman of the House intelligence committee, whose investigation of the CIA has yet to get off the ground.

Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.) told reporters yesterday that he had hoped Nedzi would remain as chairman, but recognized that Nedzi was unwilling to do so.

"I'm not going to punish him by asking him to stay on," Albert said. He said he plans to name a new chairman for the restive committee Monday.

Other members of Congress, however, vowed a campaign to reject Nedzi's resignation and thus rebuke the other Democrats on the intelligence committee who have been unhappy with his leadership.

"If they can do it to Lou Nedzi, they can do it to the rest of us," charged New York Democrat Samuel S. Stratton, a longtime member of the

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House Armed Services Committee, on which Nedzi also serves.

He said there was also a move under way by some House members to abolish the committee if Nedzi leaves.

Committee Democrats first called for Nedzi's resignation last week, after disclosures that he had been secretly briefed more than a year ago about the CIA's involvement in assassination plots and other illegal and improper activities. They agreed instead to settle for a separate CIA investigating subcommittee headed by Rep. James V. Stanton (D-Ohio), but the compromise fell apart this week in a bitter dispute over Nedzi's appointment to the subcommittee.

Confronted with demands that everyone on the 10-member committee double as members of the Stanton subcommittee, Nedzi turned in his letter of resignation from the chairmanship and from the committee to Albert Thursday afternoon.

Church did not elaborate on his statement that the Senate committee's assassination probe spans the early days of the Johnson administration as well as the latter part of the Eisenhower administration and the Kennedy administration.

However, the late President Johnson has been quoted as saying he discovered after taking office in 1963 that "we had been operating a damned Murder, Inc., in the Caribbean."